

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 OIC-02 STR-07 /102 W
-----100771 130450Z /73

R 120515Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0678
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 3095

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: EGEN, ASEAN, SN, TH
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE VIEWS ON US-ASEAN WASHINGTON MEETING

REF: SINGAPORE 2984

1. IN JULY 10 DISCUSSION OF FORTHCOMING US-ASEAN MEETING
WITH EMBOFF, OUTGOING MFA POLITICAL DIVISION DEPUTY DIRECTOR
FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA, PETER CHAN, REITERATED NUMBER OF POINTS
MADE BY FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM (REFTEL) BUT ADDED SOME
DETAILS. CHAN, WHO WILL ATTEND WASHINGTON TALKS AS COUNSELOR
OF SINGAPORE'S WASHINGTON EMBASSY, INDICATED THAT US POLI-
TICAL COMMITMENT TO ASEAN WAS MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF TALKS
FOR GOS. ALTHOUGH VAGUE ON WHAT SUCH A COMMITMENT MIGHT
ENTAIL, CHAN COMMENTED THAT MONDALE TRIP HAD BEEN MERE SYMBOL
AND DID NOT SUFFICE. HE REPEATED GOS VIEW THAT US SUPPORT
FOR ASEAN WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE BEFORE A CRISIS DEVELOPED
RATHER THAN AFTERWARDS.

2. THAILAND'S HESITANCY OVER WASHINGTON TALKS, ACCORDING
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TO CHAN, WAS MORE SUBSTANTIVE THAN MERE PIQUE ON PART OF UPPADIT.
CHAN, WHO ATTENDED ASEAN PATTAYA TALKS, SAID THAT THAILAND IS
INTENT ON IMPROVING ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA, VIETNAM, AND
KAMPUCHEA BECAUSE IT BELIEVES IT CANNOT RELY ON US SUPPORT.
IMPLICATION IS THAT HAVING LOST FAITH IN US AND SOUGHT TO
MEND FENCES WITH ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS, THAILAND DOES NOT
WANT TO RESUME APPEARANCE OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH US UNLESS

CONCRETE BENEFITS RESULT. ACCORDING TO CHAN, GOS AND, BY INFERENCE, OTHER ASEAN STATES ARE WORRIED BY THAI ATTITUDE AND BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT THAILAND HAVE ALTERNATIVE TO FRIENDSHIP WITH COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS. THIS IS WHY, SAID CHAN, US POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO ASEAN STATES IS IMPORTANT.

3. ASKED WHAT ASEAN EXPECTED IN TERMS OF "CONCRETE" RESULTS FROM TALKS, CHAN MENTIONED MODEST DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, CONCESSIONS ON TRADE, AND, ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA, SOME GIVE ON NORTH-SOUTH ISSUES SUCH AS THE COMMON FUND, HE DID NOT ELABORATE.

4. ACCORDING TO CHAN, GOS RECOGNIZES IMPORTANCE OF OPPORTUNITY PROVIDED BY TALKS TO MEET WITH CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS. GOS OBVIOUSLY UNDERSTANDS KEY ROLE OF CONGRESS IN FOREIGN POLICY FORMULATION AND ITS ABILITY TO PLACE CONSTRAINTS ON ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

5. COMMENT: ASEAN COUNTRIES, FROM CHAN'S DESCRIPTION, SEE SELVES AS VIRTUALLY UNIQUE EXAMPLE OF REGIONAL GROUPING WHICH HAS FORMED ON LOCAL INITIATIVE AND WHOSE MODERATE ATTITUDES CAN BE HELPFUL TO US IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH MEMBERS AS WELL AS IN MORE RADICAL THIRD WORLD GROUPINGS. THEY SEEM TO FEEL THAT US HAS NOT YET GIVEN SUFFICIENT PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF STATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF ASEAN ON WORLD SCENE. WHAT SINGAPOREANS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO DO IN RECENT EXCHANGES
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ON WASHINGTON TALKS IS PROVIDE MUCH GUIDANCE ON JUST HOW US IS SUPPOSED TO GO ABOUT BESTOWING THIS RECOGNITION.
INGRAHAM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SINGAP03095
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780286-0786
Format: TEL
From: SINGAPORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780768/aaaacfoo.tel
Line Count: 97
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 86dd7e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 SINGAPORE 2984
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2033597
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SINGAPORE VIEWS ON US-ASEAN WASHINGTON MEETING
TAGS: EGEN, SN, TH, ASEAN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/86dd7e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014